

United States Congress

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 8, 2014

322

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We are writing to express our support for North Carolina's efforts to be a showcase state for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the FCC works on implementation of the ConnectED initiative and the E-rate program.

As you learned recently from Lieutenant Governor Dan Forest and State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson, North Carolina has invested heavily in digital learning since 2005. Over \$150 million in state funds have served as a match to E-rate funds distributed to the State's public school districts and public charter schools. As a result, 97% of North Carolina's K-12 schools will be served with dedicated fiber connections by July 2014.

While our state has made great strides in building critical infrastructure, only 22% of students have the "desktop access" they will need to take full advantage of digital learning opportunities. Since 2005, a bipartisan commitment has been made by all the relevant policymaking bodies in North Carolina, from the Governor, General Assembly and others, to address this challenge by fully integrating digital content within North Carolina's classrooms. Improving the internal wired and wireless networks within our schools is now a key focus.

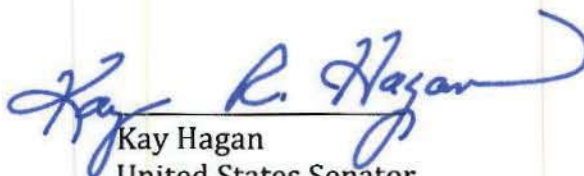
As you continue your implementation of the E-rate program, it is clear that the nation would benefit from a select few states serving as models to others, demonstrating the planning, policy framework and sustainable funding required for the K-12 transition to digital learning. North Carolina has positioned itself to be just that model. We look forward to working with you.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration.

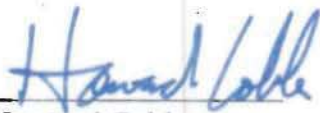
Sincerely,



Richard Burr
United States Senator





Kay Hagan
United States Senator


Howard Coble
Member of Congress


Walter Jones
Member of Congress


G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress


Renee Ellmers
Member of Congress


Richard Hudson
Member of Congress


Robert Pittenger
Member of Congress


David Price
Member of Congress


Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress


Patrick McHenry
Member of Congress


George Holding
Member of Congress


Mark Meadows
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 16, 2014

The Honorable David Price
U.S. House of Representatives
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Price:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program – and the concerted efforts the State of North Carolina has made to strengthen digital learning opportunities. I particularly appreciate the bipartisan commitment North Carolina lawmakers at both the state and federal level have demonstrated to ensure connectivity for schools and libraries within your state.

Modernization of the E-rate program is among the most important tasks currently facing the Commission. I am a strong advocate for the E-rate program and the need to modernize its operation to emphasize high-speed broadband. I have attached two recent speeches on the topic. Moreover, it is critical to America's future to ensure that our schools and libraries have affordable access to modern high-capacity broadband technologies. In addition, as your letter indicates, in order to help provide our students with a 21st century education, it is essential that we re-prioritize the current program resources to focus both on high-speed broadband connectivity *to* schools and libraries and *within* schools and libraries.

Commission staff is reviewing the record that has been developed in response to the July 2013 *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, and meeting with stakeholders to ensure that we have robust input from all interested parties. Just a few weeks ago, the staff released a Public Notice seeking focused comment on a handful of specific issues that have been raised by commenters. My goal is for the Commission to adopt an Order this summer that would implement fundamental structural and administrative changes that would go into effect in 2015. We need to ensure that the E-rate program supports the high-capacity broadband needed to give our students access to 21st century educational opportunities, while simultaneously improving the efficiency and administration of the program and establishing explicit program goals and measurements.

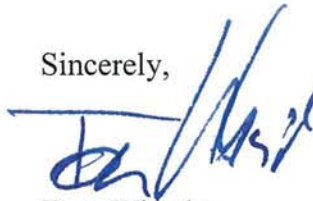
As part of the effort to reach out to stakeholders, the Commission held an E-rate Modernization Workshop on May 6, 2014, where Commission staff and E-rate stakeholders discussed the challenge of delivering high-speed connectivity to and within schools and libraries. Two respected leaders from North Carolina, Mr. Phil Emer, Director of Technology Planning & Policy of North Carolina State University's Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, and Mr. Joe Freddoso, President & CEO of the Microelectronics Center of North Carolina (MCNC), participated in the Workshop and shared their insights on these important issues.

Page 2—The Honorable David Price

I can assure you that as we proceed with reform of this important program, we will take the views of all stakeholders into account, including those espoused by your constituents. We also will include your letter in the record of the proceeding for Commission consideration.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler

Enclosures



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 16, 2014

The Honorable Richard Burr
United States Senate
217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

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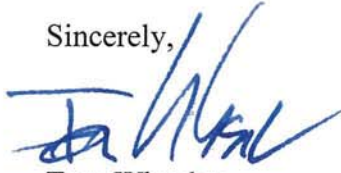
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Tom Wheeler

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 16, 2014

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
U.S. House of Representatives
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program – and the concerted efforts the State of North Carolina has made to strengthen digital learning opportunities. I particularly appreciate the bipartisan commitment North Carolina lawmakers at both the state and federal level have demonstrated to ensure connectivity for schools and libraries within your state.

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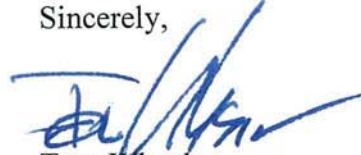
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Tom Wheeler

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

May 16, 2014

The Honorable Howard Coble
U.S. House of Representatives
2188 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Coble:

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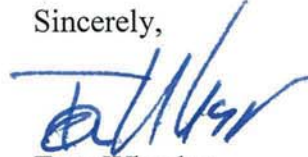
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Tom Wheeler

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

May 16, 2014

The Honorable Renee Ellmers
U.S. House of Representatives
426 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Ellmers:

Thank you for your letter regarding modernization of the Commission's rules governing the Schools and Libraries universal service support mechanism – also known as the E-rate program – and the concerted efforts the State of North Carolina has made to strengthen digital learning opportunities. I particularly appreciate the bipartisan commitment North Carolina lawmakers at both the state and federal level have demonstrated to ensure connectivity for schools and libraries within your state.

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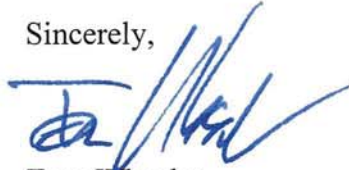
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Tom Wheeler

Enclosures



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THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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May 16, 2014

The Honorable Kay Hagan
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hagan:

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Tom Wheeler

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